



S.G.W. TOURING & TANDEM CYCLING CLUB

SLIEVE GULLION WHEELERS TOUR OF SOUTH ARMAGH

GLORIOUS SUNSHINE

Sunshine for Slieve Gullion Wheelers as over 130 cyclists take to the highways and byways of South Armagh leaving the Mountain House at 10 am on Sunday. The last Sunday in May is always a special day for the SGW club as it is their annual tour date and today was no exception. Cyclist from 10 of the 32 counties lined up for the start and got underway down the Tullyawe road heading for Whitecross after the photoshoots had been taken of various groups and Phoenix Nursing Agency, tour sponsors handing over a cheque to club Chairman Kevin Kenny. Kevin thanked John Rafferty for his generous donation. Kevin said, "I am delighted in my first year as club chairman to see such a wonderful turnout of cyclists on what has turned out to be a glorious morning. I thank everyone for supporting our tour and especially our neighbouring club Newry Wheelers who give us great support every year turning out in big numbers".

SAFETY

Safety is always an important issue and we thank Danny McSherry for erecting warning signs on the local roads, Bernard Murphy for organising the lead car and Victor Henning from Newry Bikers Club for supplying three of their club members to marshal the route and what a magnificent job they did. Well done boys and to the PSNI who escorted the race from the Mountain House to Corkey's Corner. As per usual Joe Murtagh was on hand to act as sweeper driving the van kindly supplied by Sean Hearty Transport limited.

TANDEMS

There is always a first time and it was gratifying to have three tandem bikes from Newry and Mourne WATCH club on this hilly tour. Berni Sloan, Mads Maginn and David McClurg were flying fast and furious towards Markethill before being caught by the leading peloton of Jim McCreesh, Con Short and Peter Tomany. Their pilots Liam Murtagh, Martin McVerry and Pat McElroy knew there was still along way to go and many steep climbs such as Keady Mountain still ahead of them. I overheard them saying at the tea stop in Newtownhamilton that after conquering the hills of South Armagh they are heading to Tralee in June on their tandems to have ago at the wee hills in Kerry—or do they call them mountains? Anyhow good luck to the tandem bikers.

BANANNAS

You can't cycle without food and thanks to all club members who supplied sandwiches for the Newtown stop and to their wives who organised the food stop in the Community Centre. To Newry and Mourne Council and the Centre management committee we thank them for the use of the Community Centre. To Jim Rocks and Sons we are grateful for supplying the bananas.

ORGANISATION

Club Secretary Sean Morgan hadn't time to cycle as he dealt with the administration and overall organisation of the tour. When I spoke to him during his marshalling duties in Newtown he commented, "This is one of the most successful tours that we have run and it is due to our professional approach" Club Press Officer Danny McSherry commented, "I can't disagree with that but to have a grand day of sunshine during such an inclement spell of weather was a great lift and would have contributed to the great turn out of cyclists representing 18 different cycling clubs from Ards to Dublin and from Dundalk to Fintona."

SCENERY

Talking to various cyclists in my group as we cycled past Creggan down into Forkhill and up to Meigh, many of the cyclists who were doing it for the first commented on the beautiful scenery and the hills which made the tour an ideal route for those training for the Wicklow 200 on Sunday 12th June.

MEDALS

Back in the Mountain House after climbing Sturgan bray and Lislea hill a bowl of soup along with tea and sandwiches was much appreciated. Thanks to Brian Dooley for the use of his premises and to Briege and Irene (B&I) catering. Last word goes to one of the first two ladies to finish the tour. Karly McKay a native of Vancouver in Canada, now living in England had come over to cycle the tour with her friend Trudy Brown from the Northern Dave Kane club in Belfast had this to say, "It was an absolutely brilliant tour and the marshalling was excellent. I have cycled in Australia, Canada and London but without a doubt cycling in South Armagh is the best. Thanks to Slieve Gullion Wheelers for organising such a fine tour and this beautiful medal I will treasure for the rest of my cycling days if not for life."